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Priorities

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Jedi Master Darrus Jeht has plenty of ships, but lately he finds himself drawn more and more to the Legacy - - an antique vessel that was delivered to him in crates. He doesn't know who sent him the parts or why, but he's happier aboard the fast, mysterious ship than anywhere else. Learn more in our latest supplement to the Living Force campaign.

She looked at the bay with a gleam in her eyes. "Okay, Darrus. It's official." With one hand on her hip, the Twi'lek grinned over at where he lay on a hover board under a heavy engine assembly up on hydrojacks. "You have too many ships."

Across the hangar, a second woman nodded. "Well, in all fairness, Aayla, this one here is mine." The ship the Human female gestured to as she spoke was a blood-red metallic Firespray. It was one of four starships in the bay; the other three belonged to the Jedi under the engine. The Twi'lek had mechanical grease on her blue hands and was looking over all the ships with considerable envy.

"Have you become a collector while I was away, Darrus?" Her tone was playful, but the message was clear. Jedi were not supposed to have significant personal holdings. Such things were not only considered a distraction but could cause a conflict of interest. Master Darrus Jeht understood the rule and even agreed with it, but this inadvertent collection of ships wasn't intentional.

The Headhunter, his first vessel, was an assigned ship purchased through the auspice of the Almas Academy when he was an active student in need of transport. The Night Gyre, as she was called, was a point of personal pride, and though she had been through a number of scrapes, she always came out of them relatively intact. Of course, Tril called her neurotic, but that was because of an intermittent sensor ghost caused by an unfortunate asteroid incident before Darrus had taken possession of the ship. No matter how often the Night Gyre's systems were replaced, the "ghost" remained. In his eyes, that was part of her charm.

Then there was the ship the lady Twi'lek was sitting on, her sandaled feet dangling over the side. It was one of a kind - - a prototype Delta starfighter of the same production run now in service as the Jedi fighter of choice. Near the Twi'lek's left hand, one of the fighter's two slave astromechs swiveled and beeped softly. That was R4-D1; R4-D2 was on the other side of the fighter's daggerlike hull, echoing its sibling's system noises. The chatter made the blue-skinned Jedi giggle. "Your big black ship is talking to itself again, Darrus."

The Delta starfighter had been assigned to him by the Council on Coruscant, though its occasionally schizophrenic nature made him acutely aware at times of just why the production-line Delta 7s had only one astromech attached. The input from two droids was sometimes more than the flight computer could take and left the ship... unstable. The droids also had a habit of arguing with each other, not the kind of thing a pilot should have to cope with in the middle of a dogfight.

He chuckled quietly back to the Jedi, rolling his dark eyes at the fighter under her. "It does that." He took a spanner to the line of bolts over his head as the two women in the bay started talking about something he could not quite make out. They were good friends, those two, and for that Darrus was grateful. Things would be been a lot more complicated these days if they were not.

The ship he was working on now was a total mystery, much like his social life. It had started arriving in massive crates a few months ago from a departure point near the old Taris system. The shipments were always marked to him and always pre-paid, but there were never any indications where they had come from. Even Tril's system Milliner had been unable to trace the cargo manifests, which meant they had been utterly concealed. But why? And by whom?

It wasn't like the vessel was an industrial secret or apparently stolen. No, it was actually some kind of antique, with structural parts dated more than two millennia old. It had obviously seen better days, and even once the cargo crates had all arrived, there had not been enough parts to complete a full vessel. He'd called in every favor he had plus a few he didn't just to get the parts needed to complete her. When he was done, the ship had been as much an enigma as it had when it was in pieces.

Her profile matched nothing in any of the galactic records. The original parts showed signs of being custom work, though some of her design elements were Corellian in nature. Several panels had evidence of combat wear, and her hyperdrive was of an antiquated but extremely efficient construction. She was fast, especially for a ship of her age. Not the fastest transport her size, but with the right parts, she could certainly hold her own.

The one thing Darrus had not been prepared for was how quickly he had become attached to the new ship. In the last six months, he had clocked fewer than ten flight hours in the Night Gyre, and his only pilot time with the Delta-6 was a combat mission in the Torrad system. Every other time he'd been in space, it was at the controls of the Legacy.

The name had been Tril's idea, but it fit well. The ship was obviously a gift from someone unknown, and while it was nothing he had ever seen before, it did feel like a part of him. He felt very comfortable walking along its curved corridors. It felt right to have his troopers in its bunk compartments and his speeders in its ready bay. When he fired up the Legacy's engines and screamed into the deep black, he felt contentment like nothing he'd ever experienced before. The Legacy was a part of him, one that had been missing long before that first mysterious crate arrived on Almas.

Even Shard, the leader of his troopers, had commented on how much more relaxed Darrus seemed to be when he was working on the Legacy or sitting

behind her controls. It was true; he was happier aboard the Legacy than he was anywhere else in the galaxy. He did most of his training in her main bay now, and when he slept, it was generally in his shipboard cabin - - unless duty demanded otherwise.

Darrus tightened the last of the bolts and slid out from under the engine casing. A and Tril were over by the water dispenser, drinking and giggling manically. "All right, you two," he said as he wiped bearing fluid from his hands, "what is it?"

They looked at each other like conspirators caught in the act. When they stopped grinning long enough to speak, it was Trilinae that answered. "Oh, nothing really. We were just plotting to swipe your fighters. Aayla thinks it would take you a day to even notice, but I know you better. I said we could fly the Kessel Run, race to Rodia, and take the rest of the month vacationing in Cloud City before you missed us."

Darrus colored slightly, blushing at the jibe. He had been more than a little preoccupied lately, but with the Jedi Hunters prowling Hedrett and things heating up elsewhere, it was everything he could do not to dwell on death and loss all day. He desperately needed these distractions, but they should not come at the expense of others.

He shucked off his worksuit and changed quickly into light evening attire. It was the balmy season outside, and Cularin's humidity could be stifling for the over-dressed. He came over, put an arm around both their shoulders and smiled. "Okay, if you think me so inattentive, how do you explain these?"

He concentrated for a moment and a small metal clip hovered up out of his shirt pocket. Attached to the clip was a trio of thin steel sheets, each one embossed with red and black letters and a hologrammatic image of several figures moving on a circular stage. At the sight of the concert tickets, Trilinae's eyes grew wide, and the Twi'lek's smile went from amusement to delight.

"Sien'Soro!" they howled simultaneously. "Backstage!? How?"

Darrus nodded. He had been preoccupied lately, but not so inattentive as to miss the one concert appearance in this quadrant of the galaxy by the one band he knew both women adored. It had taken some considerable effort to score the tickets, but when one rescues a band's transport convoy from a Separatist blockade, such things become easier to arrange.

"I have my ways. Now, the concert's four parsecs away, but I can think of only one ship around here fast enough to get there in time. And since you two have been teasing me so much that I haven't been able to remount her hyperdrive, I guess we'll probably miss the - - "

Both women were out from under his arms and across the bay to the Legacy before he could blink. Aayla started jacking up the motivator while Trilinae prepped the drive cradle. "What are you just standing there for, Darrus?" she said with an urgent look in her eyes. "We have work to do!"

He chuckled softly and headed back over to his worksuit. Somehow, he had

a feeling they would not be teasing him about the Legacy any more. Now, if only he could figure out how to get the new fighter cradle assembly to work, life would be perfect - - if only for a little while.

But which fighter to stow on the Legacy? The Night Gyre or the Delta-6? Darrus looked between them even as Aayla and Tril started arguing about manifold couplings and what to wear to the concert. Decisions, decisions...